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Back taxes finally in on fugitive's mansion

Case settled three years after gun runner fled U.S.

By ADRIAN HIGGINS

Journal staff writer

Fairfax County officials have finally recovered nearly \$20,000 in back taxes that convicted arms runner and accused hired gun Frank Terpil failed to pay on his McLean mansion.

The annual tax bills ran up after Terpil fled the home — and the

country — in September 1980 when his sphere of international intrigue began to crumble.

While local officials have retrieved the back taxes, federal prosecutors are still trying to retrieve Terpil himself.

"I've heard he's alive in Beirut, dead in Tripoli, and at a nudist encounter session in Marseilles," said

assistant U.S. Attorney E. Lawrence Barcella.

The county has secured payment of the back taxes on the \$384,500 contemporary Japanese-motif home at 1102 Chain Bridge Road, apparently from proceeds of the forced sale of the house last year to local automobile dealer Vincent Sheehy of Sheehy Ford.

The taxes recovered total \$19,911, including \$3,933.72 in penalties and interest.

As tax delinquency goes, the sum is "relatively high," said County Attorney David T. Stitt.

Barcella, who has an indictment

against Terpil for conspiracy to murder a Libyan revolutionary, said the 44-year-old former CIA agent fled the country a few days after the Internal Revenue Service put a lien against the house to recover more than \$3 million in federal taxes.

The income taxes were on large sums paid to Terpil by the government of former Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, Barcella said. Terpil supplied arms and services to Amin, whose bloody regime was overthrown in 1979.

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Journal photo by George

Fugitive Frank Terpil's \$384,500 mansion on Chain Bridge was sold last year to local automobile dealer Vincent Sheehy.

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If Terpil can be traced and extradited, Barcella is planning to prosecute him for allegedly attempting to arrange the murder in 1976 of Umar Abdul-lah Muhaishi at the bidding of Libyan ruler Muammar Qaddafi.

According to Barcella, Terpil was willing to pay an assassin \$1 million to kill Muhaishi, who attempted to overthrow Qaddafi in 1975.

Terpil bought the McLean house in 1978. Barcella, who has visited the property, said it was showing signs of neglect between the time Terpil abandoned it and the IRS auction last September.

"It's a great chunk of real estate. It's about a 9-

iron shot from (Sen. Edward) Kennedy's place," Barcella said.

"I imagine it was quite a showpiece" when Terpil and his wife lived there, he said. Fairfax County Finance Office director Warren Hutchison said his records show the delinquent taxes were paid in January, although he was not sure who paid them.

An IRS spokeswoman said that when the agency auctions off property, the buyer must settle up outstanding bills on the property.

It could not be determined yesterday, however, whether the new owners — automobile dealer Sheehy and his wife, Helen — had paid Terpil's taxes.